REPERTORY PLAYS. No. 9 NET

THE DUMB AND THE BLIND

HAROLD CHAPIN

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THE DUMB AND THE BLIND

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY

HAROLD CHAPIN

GOWANS & GRAY, LTD.
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Produced for the first time on any stage by the Scottish Repertory Theatre Company, under the direction of Mr. ALFRED WAREING, *at the Royalty Theatre, Glasgow, on Monday, November 20th, 1911, with the following cast:*

Joe	- -	Mr. FREDERICK LLOYD.
Liz	- -	Miss ELSIE DAVISON.
Bill	- -	Mr. ELIOT MAKEHAM.
Emmy	- -	Miss EUGENIE GRAY.

Cast of performance by the "THE PLAYACTORS," *Royal Court Theatre, London,* 1912.

Joe	- -	Mr. HUBERT WILLIS.
Liz	- -	Miss WINIFRED RAE.
Bill	- -	Mr. TELFORD HUGHES.
Emmy	- -	Miss IRENE ROSS.

Cast of Performance under Miss MARIE TEMPEST'S *management, Prince of Wales Theatre, London,* 1912.

Joe	- -	Mr. W. GRAHAM BROWNE.
Liz	- -	Miss ELSIE DAVISON.
Bill	- -	Mr. JOHN ALEXANDER.
Emmy	- -	Miss BESSIE COURTNEY.

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CHARACTERS

JOE HENDERSON (*of mud-barge* E4).
LIZ (*his wife*).
EMMY (*his daughter, aged twelve*).
TOM (*his son, aged 14 months*).
BILL PEPPER (*also of the mud-barge; his friend*).

THE DUMB AND THE BLIND

SCENE : *a top room in a tenement-house in Bermondsey. The door opens on to the landing, across which is the bedroom. Through the open window—a large sash-window without curtains—can be seen an extensive panorama of smoking chimneys, dirty steeples, and telegraph poles, silhouetted against a sky across which the neutral greys and warmer rose tints of a Spring evening are creeping. Through this window a flood of dusty yellow sunlight illumines most of the room. The large kitchen table covered with a red cloth which stands in the window is full in this light. The linoleum-covered floor reflects it more remotely, and its furthest beams just reach the three rough chairs which are in the course of conversion into a make-shift bed of childish proportions against the wall below the door. Other chairs are at the table : one above, one below, and one beside it facing the window.*

The fire is burning brightly behind a large three-fold clothes-horse covered with wet linen, which, being semi-transparent, is converted by the flames into a luminous screen of flaming orange which dies to a dull red and leaps again to flame when the fire is replenished. In the shadows on either side of

the fire are articles of furniture; a dresser, poorly furnished with crockery but rich in undarned socks, novelettes, etc.; and an old chest of drawers.

A cheap alarum clock, ticking on the mantelpiece and just visible above the clothes-horse, points to something past five as the curtain rises, disclosing Mrs. Henderson engaged in hanging the last of the wet linen on the horse, taking it from a zinc bath and wringing it with considerable strength.

Mrs. Henderson is a big, capable-looking woman of the labouring class. About thirty-six years of age, she is not uncomely, but equally not a beauty. Her dark hair is twisted into a knot at the back of her head and locked in unostentatious curl-papers around her forehead. She wears a dark skirt and a red blouse, open at the neck, the sleeves being rolled up above her elbows.

From somewhere—a long way off—comes the monotonous reiteration of an incomplete set of chimes: three notes repeated again and again rhythmically and endlessly. Some one in the street below is calling "Any chai'ss tomen' or bar'ss tomen'?" at intervals of half a minute. His voice is fading away into the distance when a clatter of juvenile boots on the stairs heralds the approach of Emmy Henderson, daughter of the house. The young lady enters swinging her school-bag, and crosses to the table, where she throws it down loudly. She is an ordinary Board School child of eleven or twelve: long black legs, slightly darned, and slightly in need of darning; short black skirt in

need of lengthening; and blue blouse. Also pig-tails, boots, and a sailor hat.

She addresses her mother reproachfully.

EMMY

Nice fing, muvver! I dunno wot you did wiv vat compoun' multiplication.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Apprehensively.*) Were you kep' in for it?

EMMY

(*Incensed.*) Kep' in?... Didn't you never learn compoun' multiplication, muvver. (*Mrs. H. is too busy to reply.*) You went to school, didn't you?

MRS. HENDERSON

'F course.

EMMY

Well, wot did vey learn you?

MRS. HENDERSON

Oh... all sorts o' things.

EMMY

Pity vey didn't learn you compoun' multiplication.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*With sudden authority.*) Nah, vat's enough of it.

[*Emmy is subdued. She opens her satchel and produces an exercise book. Kneeling on*

chair by table she examines a page. Then, after a moment's struggle, curiosity triumphs.

EMMY

Wot did you try to do wiv it?

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Evasively.*) Oh, I dunno.

EMMY

(*Cuttingly.*) No more don't noboddy! Teacher kep' me arf-an-'our trying to show 'er 'ow I'd done it; an' ven she kep' me anover 'arf tryin' to show me w'y it was wrong. (*Decisively.*) I'll tell you wot it is, muvver: you'll 'ave to take Tommy aht yourself of an evening nah I've got into compoun' multiplication.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*With a slight sigh.*) Alright.

EMMY

(*Compassionate but firm.*) Yes, I know you like to get rid of 'im for a bit w'en you've 'ad 'im all day, but I can't trust you wiv me 'ome work like I used to, nah, can I?

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Regretfully.*) No. (*She dries her hands on towel at door.*)

EMMY

(*Her good nature getting the best of her.*) Tell you wot. I'll take Tommy aht on grammar nights. You're alright at parsin'.

MRS. HENDERSON

Oh, yes.

EMMY

You used to be alright at arifmetic—but you must admit—compoun' multiplication——

MRS. HENDERSON

(*With another sudden access of authority.*) Nah, look 'ere, miss: if you say "compoun' multiplication" to me again, I'll warm you, so mind. (*She attacks the makeshift bed, arranging the chairs and patting up the nondescript mattress. That done, she fetches from the chest of drawers a blanket and sheet.*)

EMMY

(*Reading these omens.*) Farver's night 'ome?

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Returning with the bedclothes to the bed.*) Friday; don't you know it is?

EMMY

You needn't snap me 'ead off. 'E ain't always 'ome of a Friday.

MRS. HENDERSON

Pretty near.

EMMY

(*Still watching the bed-making.*) 'E seems to be always comin' 'ome, don't 'e ?

MRS. HENDERSON

D'you mind ? (*A cockney sarcasm, popular with the fair sex.*)

EMMY

Well—I don't particularly *like* sleeping on free chairs.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*For consolation.*) It's only for a couple o' nights.

EMMY

Yes (*then reminiscently*) muvver ! Do you remember w'en we 'ad 'im 'ome for a 'ole week w'ile ve barge was bein' painted ?

MRS. HENDERSON

(*In exculpation.*) Well, 'e 'adn't got nothin' to do then. A man always gets a bit irritable-like w'en 'e ain't got nothin' to occupy 'is mind.

EMMY

I don't see as 'e's got much to occupy 'is mind—muckin' abaht on a mud-barge.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Straightening her back.*) Nah, Miss 'Igh-an'-Mightiness, don't you get turnin' of your nose up at ve barge ; it's kept us for nigh on ten years.

EMMY

Wiv your bit o' charing.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*At work again.*) 'F course.

EMMY

(*After some thought.*) Muvver...

MRS. HENDERSON

Wot ?

EMMY

Wot did farver do before 'e started on ve barge ?

MRS. HENDERSON

'E looked for work.

EMMY

All the time ?

MRS. HENDERSON

Well, of course, 'e got dis'eartened sometimes w'en I was out of a place and couldn't give 'im nothin' to spend.

EMMY

(*After a sniff.*) Muvver...

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Parrying further questions.*) There's Tommy.

EMMY

(*Holding her ground.*) I've got me 'ome-work to do.

MRS. HENDERSON

I'll——

EMMY

(*Warningly.*) It's compoun' multiplication.

MRS. HENDERSON

I'll give you a note to the teacher.

EMMY

(*Shaking her head.*) It's a bad 'abit to get into.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Wearily.*) Oh, alright—disobliging—(*moves towards door.*)

EMMY

(*Jumping down.*) No—alright, muvver—I'll see to 'im for a bit. You'll 'ave to—(*she finishes the remark from the other side of the door*)—get me up early in ve morning to do it, vat's all.

[*Mrs. H. finishes making the bed. From the other room Emmy can be heard talking to the baby, and occasionally calling to her mother across the landing.*

EMMY

(*Off.*) 'Ullo, melord, 'n' how long 'ave you been awake for? Come on! (*A grunt as she lifts the baby.*) There we are! (*Calling.*) Muvver!

MRS. HENDERSON

Yes?

EMMY

(*Enthusiastically.*) Ain't 'is bump gettin' on alright? Can't 'ardly see it.

MRS. HENDERSON

Good job for you it is, Miss. Take better care of 'is 'ead another time. Dancin' about.

EMMY

(*Greatly offended.*) I wasn't dancin' about.

MRS. HENDERSON

I suppose the lampost barged into you of itself?

EMMY

(*Triumphant.*) It wasn't a lampost, it was a tram-car, see? (*To the baby.*) Nah ven— (*Calling.*) Where's 'is ovver shoe? (*To the baby.*) W'ere's your ovver shoe, Tommy? Ain't et it, 'ave you? Oh, 'ere we are. (*Pause.*) 'Ullo. (*Calling.*) Muvver!

MRS. HENDERSON

Well?

EMMY

'Ere's Farver comin' upstairs.

MRS. HENDERSON

Oh—ven if you'll wait 'arf a minute you can run aht for a pint.

[*A clumping of heavy feet on the stairs and a rough voice somewhere about the floor below.*

JOE

(*Below.*) Hullo.

EMMY

(*Just outside door.*) Hullo.

JOE

Wot are you 'avin' a game at? (*Pause.*) 'Ullo Tommy! 'Ullo young feller-me-lad.

[*The heavy feet are ascending the stairs; two pairs of them.*

EMMY

Say "hullo" to farver, Tommy, 'cos 'e only comes 'ome once a week.

JOE

Something like, ain't 'e?

[*A third voice—Bill Pepper's—replies.*

BILL

(*Off.*) Not 'arf.

[*Joe Henderson enters followed by Bill.*

Pepper. Both are barge-labourers: heavy-footed, ill-shaven—Joe wears a scrubby moustache—and roughly dressed in corduroys and heavy coats with red handkerchiefs around their necks.

MRS. HENDERSON

Hullo.

JOE

(*Not to be outdone in courtesy.*) Hullo. (*Then after a pause.*) I've brought old Bill up ; d'you—(*He stumbles over the bath on the floor R. C. and instantly is in a temper.*) Blast it ! Wot d'yer want to 'ave vat blinkin' fing abaht ve floor for ?

MRS. HENDERSON

I was wringing——

JOE

I might 'a' broke me bloomin' neck over it.

MRS. HENDERSON

Well you didn't.

JOE

Clever, ain't you ? Leavin' fings. Can't you sit dahn, Bill, after those stairs—?

BILL

Vey are a bit...(*Crosses and sits below table.*)

JOE

(*Crosses and cuts a piece of bread at table, then sits and starts eating.*) Puh! You've got it 'ot enough in 'ere.

MRS. HENDERSON

I've 'ad the window open. I 'ad to 'ave the fire, to dry by.

JOE

(*Angrily.*) Washin'?

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Nervously.*) Yes, Joe.

EMMY

(*Appearing in door.*) Can I 'ave 'apenny to spend, muvver?

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Shocked at the idea.*) No! Wot next?

EMMY

Oh muvver just 'apenny, cos——

MRS. HENDERSON

You know perfeckly well as I——

JOE

(*Raising his voice above theirs in spite of the handicap of a mouthful of bread.*) Go on! Give 'er a 'apenny wen she arsts for it.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Expostulating.*) Joe, 'ow can I——

JOE

Give 'er a 'apenny I say, when I tells you to...And don't answer me back.

[*Mrs. Henderson with dull obedience obeys, taking from her pocket a purse.*

JOE

(*Less loudly.*) And send 'er out to get me a drop o' beer.

[*Mrs. Henderson takes down a jug from dresser.*

EMMY

Nah, you know I can't go into a pub wiv baby, farver.

JOE

Wot? W'y not?

EMMY

It's agin ve law.

BILL

(*Quietly, but with authority.*) Vat's right, Joe.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*In further corroboration.*) Yes, vey——

JOE

(*Turning on her.*) Ven go an' get it yourself.

MRS. HENDERSON

Alright.

EMMY

Goo'bye. (*Turns to go.*)

MRS. HENDERSON

You might fetch ve beer an ven come back for baby——

EMMY

I'm——

JOE

(*Loudly.*) I tol' *you* to fetch it, didn't I? Well ven, go an' do it.

[*Emmy exits and clatters downstairs.*

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Going on to landing and calling after.*) Emmy! (*More loudly.*) Emmy!

EMMY

(*Pausing on the floor below.*) Wot?

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Just outside door.*) Don't go running downstairs so fast wiv baby You'll be catching 'is 'ead in ve bannisters again.

EMMY

(*Scornfully.*) Fusspot! (*Clatters on down.*)

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Returning to room.*) Vere you are, Joe! Wot d'you make me give 'er a 'apenny for?

JOE

(*Aggressively.*) 'Cause I chose...see? I suppose I can give me own kid a 'apenny wen she arsts for it, can't I? It ain't often I'm 'ome, and I likes to see people lookin' 'appy 'n' glad to see me—(*pointedly*)—not grizzlin'.

MRS. HENDERSON

I ain't grizzlin'.

JOE

(*Loudly.*) Yus you are. An' don't answer me back—before Bill! I'm surprised at you. Wot will 'e fink of us?

BILL

(*Politely.*) Oh, vat's alright. I've been married mesself; I knows wot women are.

JOE

Vey wouldn't be so bad if vey didn't jaw.

BILL

(*Agreeing*). Vat's it!

JOE

Did you ever see a couple o' women over a cup o' tea? Gawd's truff! Clack, clack, clack.

BILL

(*Nodding.*) Vat's it !

JOE

Clack, clack, clack...ve woman nex' door—or else runnin' dahn veir 'usbands.

BILL

Ah !

JOE

(*Turning on his wife again.*) Nah, wot about vat beer ?

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Who has been quietly making up the fire.*) I'm going, Joe. Gimme time to make the fire up.

JOE

(*Grunting scornfully.*) Make ve fire up.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*With more acerbity.*) You don't want to sleep in wet sheets to-night, I suppose.

JOE

I never see anythink like you ! You've always got fings dryin' wen I come 'ome. Wot's up wiv you ?

MRS. HENDERSON

You wouldn't like to come 'ome to find ve place all dirty, would you, Joe ?

JOE

Well ven, w'y couldn't you get 'em done early in ve week ? You know puffeckly well as I'd be 'ome o' Friday night. An' 'ere you are a doin' of 'em ve very day I comes 'ome. Aggravator !

MRS. HENDERSON

I 'ad a bit o' charing to do yesterday. I'll 'ave 'em all done an' out of ve way before your nex' night 'ome I——(*She is taking down jug as she speaks.*)

JOE

You won't 'ave ve chance. I'm not goin' away no more.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Turning, jug in hand.*) Wot ?

JOE

I ain't goin' away with ve barge no more.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Apprehensively.*) Got ve sack ?

JOE

(*Insulted.*) Wot d'you mean—"Got ve sack ?" Vey've put me on ve dredger ; ten bob a week extra an' live at 'ome.

MRS. HENDERSON

At 'ome ?

JOE

Yus, at 'ome...Wot's up wiv you ?

MRS. HENDERSON

You'll be 'ome all ve week ven— ? Every week ?

JOE

(*Sarcastically.*) D'you mind ?

MRS. HENDERSON

I'll——(*Suddenly opens door and exits, closing it after her.*)

BILL

She don't seem very pleased.

JOE

(*Roughly tolerant.*) She's alright. Bit startled, vat's all. She'll 'ave to get used to it.

BILL

(*After a pause, enviously.*) Bit o' luck ain't it ?

JOE

(*Unenthusiastically.*) It's alright.

BILL

Ten bob a week more.

JOE

Liz'll get that aht o' me—some of it—wen I'm 'ome all the week.

BILL

(*Awed.*) You won't go givin' 'er ve 'ole lot of it?

JOE

Ve 'ole ten bob? Wot do you take me for? Do you fink I'm goin' to slave me 'eart out on ve blinkin' dredger an' not 'ave a bit for mesself? Don't be silly. (*Changing subject.*) Firsty?

BILL

(*With some satisfaction.*) Not bad.

JOE

So'm I. Jolly 'ot in 'ere, ain't it?

BILL

I don't mind it.

JOE

It's not 'ealthy, you know. (*Rises and pulls chair out from table to enable himself to stoop and undo his boots.*) Vat's Liz all over! Goes aht charin' wile I'm away an' messes abaht ve place all ve bloomin' time wen I'm 'ome. Never goes aht, 'ardly, except to get me a drop o' beer. Aggravator!

[*There is a moment's pause while Joe removes a boot.*

BILL

(*Voicing his thoughts.*) You 'ave to work jolly 'ard on the dredger.

JOE

(*Unlacing the other boot.*) Yes.

BILL

(*Continuing.*) All ve time—wiv ve foreman watching you.

JOE

I know. (*Straightening his back, and speaking with becoming seriousness.*) I'm not so sure as I'm really betterin' mesself, you know, Bill. (*Pauses, thinking.*) Of course, it's ten bob more...but they gets it out of you in work.

BILL

I expecks vey'd put you back on one of ve ol' barges if you arst 'em to.

JOE

(*Sucking doubtfully on a tooth.*) Risky.

BILL

Risky? 'Ow?

JOE

Make 'em fink as you didn't like work.

BILL

Ah!

JOE

(*Disparagingly.*) Vey're like vat.

BILL

Vat's true.

JOE

(*Returning to his boot.*) She's takin' 'er time over vat beer.

BILL

Far to go for it? (*Rising and looking out of the window.*)

JOE

Just across ve road.

BILL

Don't see no sign of 'er. Wich pub?

JOE

Fird along...not countin' those two opposite.

BILL

(*Crossing room to a small photo of a group hanging on wall below door.*) Vis you?

JOE

(*Looking up.*) Wot? Oh vat. Yes—wiv Liz.

BILL

Taken wen you was married? Plenty of you, ain't vere?

JOE

Vat's all Liz's family.

BILL

None o' yours ?

JOE

(*Grimly.*) I saw to vat.

BILL

Oo's vis ? (*Appreciatively.*) Bit of alright.

JOE

Vat ? One of Liz's sisters or somethink ; vey all turned up.

BILL

W'y didn't you marry 'er ?

JOE

She wasn't respectable.

BILL

Was you married in church ?

JOE

Yes. Liz would 'ave it. You know wot women are for a bit o' show.

BILL

It don't do to give way to 'em.

JOE

One 'as to at ve start. Liz said as 'ow she'd be married in church or not at all...

BILL

You should a' said not at all ven.

JOE

(*Tolerantly.*) Oh, I donno...

BILL

(*Still at photo.*) Oo's vis ? Ol' chap wiv a beard...

JOE

Liz's farver...worked at a brewery. W'ere ve blinkin' Sam's vat beer ?

BILL

She does take 'er time, don't she ?

JOE

I'd go after 'er only—(*Divested of his boots he pads softly up to the door and opens it. He is about to step out on to landing when something catches his eye in the room opposite and he stops dead, staring across the landing more in curiosity than surprise.*) 'Ullo...Wot... ?

BILL

(*Turning.*) Wot's up ?

JOE

(*Softly.*) Come 'ere.

BILL

(*Taking his tone from the other.*) Wot is it? (*Moves softly up stage towards door.*)

JOE

(*Suddenly changing his mind and closing the door swiftly but silently.*) No...'arf a mo'.

BILL

(*Stopping, surprised.*) Wot's up wiv you?

JOE

Nuffin'. (*Turns to door, his hand upon the knob, but looks backs suspiciously at Bill before opening it.*) It ain't nuffin', I say.

BILL

Alright.

JOE

Ven don't go lookin' over my shoulder.

BILL

I wasn't.

JOE

(*Pointing to the furthest chair: the one below the table.*) Go an' sit over vere.

BILL

(*Surprised but amiable.*) Alright.

[*Joe watches him to the chair and then quietly opens door again and peers across landing. He holds the door a bare couple of feet open, and, as it opens down stage, nothing can be seen from the audience. After a moment of perfect silence he closes the door softly, ruffling his hair thoughtfully. An idea strikes him. He resumes his chair by the table and calls.*

JOE

(*Loudly.*) Liz!

BILL

(*Who has been watching his friend in amazement.*) Wot...ain't she gone for it, ven?

JOE

She's in ve ovver room.

BILL

'Iding?

JOE

Shut up. (*Calls again.*) Liz.

[*While the name is still on his lips Mrs. Henderson opens the door and stands on the threshold, her hat on and the jug in her hand.*

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Stopping just inside the door.*) I'm just goin' for it, Joe. I 'ad to stop an' put on me 'at. (*Turns to go.*)

JOE

Liz.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Turning obediently.*) Wot ?

JOE

'Arf a mo'.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Obediently returning to C. of room.*) Wot ?

JOE

(*Awkwardly, as he forms a question in his mind.*) Liz...wot—— (*Suddenly remembering the presence of his friend.*) 'Ere, Bill...oblige me by poppin' aht for vat beer...you don't mind ?

BILL

(*Rising, mystified.*) No.

JOE

I'd go mesself, only I've got me boots off. 'Ere. (*Hands over some money.*) Get a quart...no 'urry...

BILL

Alright. (*Goes off in dull perplexity.*)

MRS. HENDERSON

I 'ope Bill don't mind...

JOE

(*Ignoring her remark.*) Liz.

MRS. HENDERSON

Wot?

JOE

Wot was you adoin' of?

MRS. HENDERSON

Wot was I wot?

JOE

Wot was you adoin' of?

MRS. HENDERSON

W'en?

JOE

Just now. W'en I called you.

MRS. HENDERSON

Putting me 'at on.

JOE

No, you wasn't. I opened ve door.

MRS. HENDERSON

Ve door? What for?

JOE

To 'ave a look aht an' see wot 'ad become of you an' vat beer. An' I see you in vere kneelin' wiv your 'ed on ve bed. Wot's up wiv you?

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Guiltily.*) I was sayin' me prayers.

JOE

Wot?

MRS. HENDERSON

It don't take...

JOE

You don't 'ave to say your prayers before fetchin' a drop o' beer, do you?

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Reproaching the irreverence.*) Joe!

JOE

Well, wot's up wiv you, ven? (*No answer.*) Ain't you well?

MRS. HENDERSON

I'm alright.

JOE

You don't say vem every day, do you?

MRS. HENDERSON

No, nuffink like.

JOE

Ven wot...?

MRS. HENDERSON

I felt I wanted to.

JOE

Felt you wanted to? W'y?

MRS. HENDERSON

I felt—grateful-like—vat's all.

JOE

Felt wot?

MRS. HENDERSON

Grateful-like...you know... (*Ashamed.*) I sort of felt I wanted to—— (*Hesitates.*)

JOE

Well?

MRS. HENDERSON

(*More and more ashamed.*) To sort o' fank Gawd—it come over me...

JOE

Fank Gawd? Wot for?

MRS. HENDERSON

Well, because...you...ain't goin' away no more.

[*Joe is paralysed with amazement and sits staring at her, unable to speak. At last—awed—he clears his throat.*

JOE

You... (*Inadequately.*) You're glad, ven ?

MRS. HENDERSON

It's—it's a bit o' company for me——

JOE

Wot ? I am ? Get aht ! (*Rises and looks out of window, thinking.*) You don't like me goin' away, ven ?

MRS. HENDERSON

Well, I missed you sometimes.

JOE

(*Under his breath.*) 'Struth !

MRS. HENDERSON

You mean you don't miss me ?

JOE

I donno. I never noticed.

MRS. HENDERSON

Oh, but you always 'ad something to occupy your mind.

JOE

Yes (*with a fresh thought*) Liz.

MRS. HENDERSON

Wot?

JOE

You...I mean...It ain't just a 'abit wiv you?

MRS. HENDERSON

Wot?

JOE

Fankin' Gawd for fings. You ain't always adoin' of it?

MRS. HENDERSON

No. I just come over——

JOE

D'you believe in Gawd?

MRS. HENDERSON

I donno...Yes.

JOE

(*In just the same tone—he has been looking out of the window as he spoke.*) 'Ere comes ol' Bill wiv ve beer.

MRS. HENDERSON

(*Relieved.*) I'll put aht ve glasses.

[*She brings down glasses from the dresser to table. He takes her by the arm and turns her to him.*

JOE

You're quite sure it ain't just a 'abit? You're really glad as I'm goin' to be 'ome...all ve time? Spit your oaf?

MRS. HENDERSON

Of course I'm glad, Joe. Really glad——

[*Bill enters with the beer.*

BILL

(*Engrossed in his purchase.*) I spilt a bit comin' up ve stairs. Vey're vat dark!

JOE

Vat's alright.

BILL

(*Stopping and looking at them suspiciously.*) Anything up?

JOE

No.

[*Bill returns to his usual chair below the table. Mrs. Henderson has taken the beer from him, and takes it to Joe.*

JOE

(*Slowly pouring out the beer and passing it to Bill.*) D'you believe in Gawd, Bill?

BILL

(*Vaguely surprised.*) Wot? I donno. Yes, I suppose so. W'y.

JOE

Nuffin'. After all, it don't signify. (*Pushing the jug across.*) 'Ere, you pour it out. I don't want none.

BILL

Wot?

JOE

I feels a bit—'Ere, 'ave some bread 'n' cheese.

BILL

Fanks.

JOE

(*After wrestling with his thoughts.*) Liz.

MRS. HENDERSON

Wot?

JOE

(*Laboriously.*) I ain't 'ome—*forever*—even nah. We—I shall 'ave to leave you agin—some day. Wot about vat? You—— (*Turns*

almost with a groan to the table.) Gawd's truth! Wot are we 'ere for?

BILL

(*Eating.*) I donno.

[*Emmy clatters in at the door, carrying the baby, and bubbling over with amazing news.*

EMMY

Mummy, Tommy's seen a black'n'white horse, 'n' an ol' man in a carriage dressed up like a soldier, 'n' a monkey in Jute Street, 'n'——

[*The curtain descends, cutting short her volubility; but not before Joe—his face clearing—has held out his arms for his baby.*

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